

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KINSHASA 0451/1

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, US, CG
SUBJECT: NEW POLICY INITIATIVES IN AFRICA: THE ZAIRIAN PERSPECTIVE

REF: STATE 311031

1. WE ENTIRELY CONCUR IN THE PREMISE OF THE DRAFT MEMORANDUM TRANSMITTED REFTEL: I.E., IN ORDER TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE OUR BROADER INTERESTS IN AFRICA, WE MUST TAKE CARE NOT TO ALIENATE OUR TRADITIONALLY GOOD FRIENDS AMONG THE MODERATES AS WE SEEK TO STRENGTHEN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVES AND OTHER LESS FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA. AND WE ALSO AGREE THAT A LARGE PART OF THE PROBLEM IS PSYCHOLOGICAL, ONE INVOLVING FORM AS MUCH AS SUBSTANCE. THE DANGER OF MODERATES FEELING ABANDONED BY US, AND REACTING IN WAYS THAT COULD HARM OUR INTERESTS, IS HEIGHTENED TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY PERCEIVE HOSTILE OUTSIDE FORCES -- NOTABLY THE SOVIETS AND THEIR CUBAN SURROGATES -- AS SEEKING TO EXPLOIT A POWER VACUUM CREATED IN PART BY OUR OWN INACTIVITY. WHILE THE MODERATES GENERALLY SHARE AND WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR BELIEF IN NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS, WITH THE AFRICANS THEMSELVES CARRYING THE MAJOR BURDEN, THEY WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THIS THESIS UNLESS AND UNTIL WE HAVE PERSUADED THE OTHER SUPER-POWER TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN AFRICA.

2. WE BELIEVE THIS DESCRIPTION OF THE MODERATES' ANXIETIES APPLIES TO ZAIRE. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT MOBUTU QUALIFIES MORE FULLY THAN THE DRAFT PAPER INDICATES AS ONE OF THE MODERATE
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LEADERS WITH WHOM WE SHOULD KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH ON MAJOR AFRICAN ISSUES. WHILE IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT MOBUTU'S RECORD ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN SERIOUSLY LACKING OVER THE YEARS, HE HAS NEVERTHELESS PROVEN HIMSELF A VIABLE, ESSENTIALLY PRAGMATIC LEADER AT HOME AND A SUPPORTER OF US POSITIONS IN MULTILATERAL FORUMS. WE ASSESS MOBUTU'S RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS, WHILE FAR FROM EXEMPLARY, AS NOT BAD WHEN MEASURED AGAINST THAT OF MANY

OTHER AFRICAN STATES AND CONSIDERING THE TREMENDOUS DIFFICULTIES HE HAS FACED IN TRYING TO BRING ORDER OUT OF CHAOS IN THIS VAST, COMPLICATED COUNTRY. WHILE MOBUTU'S WAYS OF GOVERNING CAN BE UNREASONABLE AND AT TIMES DOWNRIGHT DISTASTEFUL, THE POTENTIAL ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE COUNTRY HE RULES IS SUCH THAT WE SHOULD NOT IGNORE HIM SO LONG AS HE IS IN POWER. MOREOVER, AS SEEN MOST RECENTLY DURING THE SHABA INVASION, HE RETAINS THE CAPABILITY OF EXERCISING CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL INFLUENCE ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA AND BEYOND. IN THIS CONTEXT MOBUTU HAS BEEN AND CAN CONTINUE TO BE USEFUL TO US ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES, RANGING FROM INTERVENTIONS WITH AMIN ON OUR BEHALF TO GIVING PUBLIC SUPPORT TO MIDDLE EAST PEACE INITIATIVES.

3. HAVING MADE THIS POINT, WE QUESTION THE PAPER'S PLACING ZAIRE OUTSIDE THE CATEGORY OF EXISTING AND POTENTIAL LEADER STATES REQUIRING MORE ATTENTION BECAUSE "PATTERNS OF INTERACTION WITH (THE GOZ) ARE WELL ESTABLISHED". CERTAINLY MOBUTU IS ACUTELY AWARE OF THIS ADMINISTRATION'S RESERVATIONS AND CONCERNS REGARDING HIS REGIME AND HOW IT IS RUNNING THE COUNTRY. BY NOW HE ALSO UNDERSTANDS THE IMPORTANCE WE PLACE ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN US ATTITUDES AND ASSISTANCE ON THE ONE HAND, AND ZAIRE'S PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING REFORMS ON THE OTHER. WE BELIEVE THIS POLICY SERVES US INTERESTS AND SHOULD BE PURSUED. BUT TO BE EFFECTIVE IT REQUIRES VERY CAREFUL ORCHESTRATION, A JUDICIOUS MIX OF CARROTS AS WELL AS STICKS. AND IN DEALING WITH SUCH A PROUD AND SENSITIVE LEADER AS MOBUTU, OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS -- AS CONFIDENTIAL

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SIDERABLE AS THEY ARE -- WILL NOT IN THEMSELVES SUFFICE TO ASSURE THE CONTINUED ACCESS TO AND INFLUENCE OVER MOBUTU THAT IS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE OUR POLICY OBJECTIVES. WE DO NOT SUGGEST THAT MOBUTU DESERVES AS MUCH CARE AND FEEDING AS CERTAIN OTHER KEY AFRICAN MODERATES; BUT WE DO BELIEVE THAT OUR INTERESTS WARRANT OUR GIVING HIM SOMEWHAT MORE ATTENTION THAN HE IS NOW GETTING, AND THAT THERE ARE WAYS OF DOING THIS WITHOUT SERIOUSLY INCREASING OUR PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION WITH A LEADER WHOSE POPULARITY AT HOME AND IMAGE ABROAD LEAVE MUCH TO BE DESIRED.

4. WHAT CAN WE DO? FIRST, WE HAVE LITTLE TO LOSE AND CONSIDERABLE TO GAIN WITH RESPECT TO RETAINING MOBUTU'S COOPERATION BY INCREASING THE LEVEL OF OUR CONSULTATIONS WITH HIM ON KEY AFRICAN ISSUES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KINSHASA 0451

IN CONTRAST TO THE FREQUENT (AND CANDID) CONSULTATIONS ON SOUTHERN AFRICA WE HELD WITH MOBUTU DURING THE TIME OF OUR FIRST INITIATIVES, WE HAVE SINCE VIRTUALLY CUT MOBUTU OUT OF THE CONSULTATION CIRCUIT ALTOGETHER. WHILE MOBUTU IS NOT A KEY PLAYER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND MAY NOT HAVE MUCH CONCRETE TO OFFER IN THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS, ZAIRE'S VITAL INTERESTS ARE DIRECTLY AND PROFOUNDLY AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND IN RHODESIA PARTICULARLY. MOREOVER, MOBUTU SHARES OUR OBJECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO ACHIEVING NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS, AND (AS SEEN BY HIS PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS MADE JOINTLY WITH OBSANJO) HE STANDS READY TO SUPPORT US. AS ALREADY SUGGESTED, THIS APPLIES AS WELL TO OTHER PROBLEM AREAS, SUCH AS THE MIDDLE EAST, THE HORN, UGANDA. BUT WE CANNOT EXPECT MOBUTU TO GO ON BEING AS RESPONSIVE TO OUR REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT WITHOUT MAKING A GREATER EFFORT TO ENGAGE IN ON-GOING CONSULTATIONS AND TAKING OTHER STEPS AS WELL TO PREVENT HIS PARANOIA FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND AND ADVERSELY AFFECTING OUR INTERESTS HERE.

5. SUCH OTHER STEPS WOULD INCLUDE PERIODIC WRITTEN MESSAGES TO MOBUTU FROM THE SECRETARY OR ABOVE TO SUPPLEMENT CONSULTATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE AMBASSADOR; USG RECEPTION OF MOBUTUS SPECIAL EMISSARIES AT APPROPRIATELY HIGH LEVELS IN WASHINGTON, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT DEPENDING ON THE OCCASION; AND VISITS TO ZAIRE BY KEY OFFICIALS IN THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS. SINCE MOBUTU CAN MORE READILY EXPLOIT THE LATTER FOR HIS OWN POLITICAL PURPOSES, AND IN ORDER TO RETAIN A CONSISTENT AND CREDIBLE STRATEGY, THE TIMING AND LEVEL OF VISITS BY US OFFICIALS SHOULD BE CAREFULLY

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SYNCHRONIZED WITH OUR ASSESSMENT OF MOBUTU'S PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING REFORMS. WE WOULD, FOR EXAMPLE, RECOMMEND A VISIT BY AMBASSADOR YOUNG OR OTHER CABINET-LEVEL OFFICIALS ONLY WHEN WE PERCEIVE PROGRESS IS IN FACT BEING MADE, THEREBY USING SUCH VISITS AS BOTH A REWARD AND AN INDUCEMENT TOWARD FURTHER FORWARD MOVEMENT. THE ULTIMATE REWARD--WHICH IF PROPERLY HANDLED COULD ALSO PROVE TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE INDUCEMENT OF ALL--IS DEVELOPING THE PROSPECT OF A VISIT TO THE US BY MOBUTU HIMSELF.

WE HAVE NOT YET REACHED THE POINT WHERE SUCH A STEP SHOULD BE PLACED UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION; BUT IT IS AN OPTION THAT SHOULD BE KEPT IN RESERVE AND AN ISSUE WHICH IN ANY CASE MOBUTU HIMSELF MAY RAISE BEFORE TOO LONG.

6. ONE FINAL THOUGHT. THERE IS BOUND TO BE DISAPPOINTMENT AND SOME RESENTMENT AMONG OUR OLD FRIENDS IN AFRICA THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAS CHOSEN NIGERIA--A "NEW FRIEND"--FOR HIS ONLY STOP IN AFRICA DURING HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP. (MOBUTU HIMSELF VOICED SUCH SENTIMENT TO ME DURING A CONVERSATION LAST WEEK.) AN EFFECTIVE GESTURE MIGHT BE FOR THE PRESIDENT--PERHAPS DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE PRIOR TO HIS TRIP--TO MAKE A STATEMENT EXPRESSING (A) REGRET THAT HE CANNOT VISIT OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES AS HE WOULD LIKE, AND (B) HOPE THAT HE WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO MEET PERSONALLY WITH THEIR LEADERS DURING THE COURSE OF HIS TIME IN OFFICE. AN EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE STEP--BUT ONE INVOLVING OBVIOUS COMPLICATIONS WITH RESPECT TO SELECTIVITY--WOULD BE FOR THE PRESIDENT TO SEND A PERSONAL MESSAGE ALONG THOSE LINES TO THE KEY MODERATE LEADERS.

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